Why You Feel Invisible

Who is this for?

Growing up…
You felt fake or invisible, like you didn't really connect with anyone.
You never felt like you developed any real identity for yourself (even near the end of adolescence).
You felt locked out of connecting with friends, partners, and having true fun; like an outsider looking in from behind thick glass.
You couldn't even talk about your day or basic opinions around the people in your life.
You were silent by default.
You had outbursts of attention seeking or outward compensating.
Nothing you do feels grounded and strong, even the fun/meaningful things seem like an anxious chase.

This is for you.

Read this all the way through before letting anything affect your actions.

The Root Cause

An emotionally repressive upbringing. It didn't need to be "abusive" for you to end up this way.
All children are born naturally expressive, when sad they're sad, when happy they're happy. At first this is cute and expected. But as they grow and push the boundaries of their environment's norms, they will be stung, and taught what is not allowed, or rewarded and reinforced for what is. This is the normal process of socialisation.
Children whose natural expressions are not consistently met with warmth and safety, or at the very least space and understanding, will learn that they shouldn't express what they feel; they may not even fully process their feelings at all. They feel stifled, and they don't even understand how, why, or that it isn't normal or healthy. Where a normal child would cry, they may run and hide from their parents.
If the emotional environment isn't consistent, they will avoid anything of emotional substance at all, for example: "how was your day?", "I'm fine", even if something bad may have happened at school that an ordinary child would just naturally talk about - what happened, how they feel, because the parents are a safe space to feel.
This socialisation gets reinforced if expression is continuously met poorly, and silence is continually 'rewarded' with the absence of a negative response. But this is survival, not healthy living.

The Reinforcing Cycle

Repression -> confusion -> insecurity -> shame -> silence -> Repeat
This cycle, when reinforced, can extend across generations if left unchecked. This may look like “my parents hit/shouted at me, and I turned out fine”, which is a subconscious response caused by their own upbringing conditions, so they never learnt to name or heal this themselves. So they don’t empathise with their child; they weren’t allowed to express themselves when they were young either, and this is how parenting looks to them.
I hope you can understand that it’s not their fault, they were a product of their environments too. At least you will be able to name this and heal from it, they were never given this.
This generational cycle is common in certain cultures like South Asian households, for example, which can contribute to a lower perceived social value of a race stereotypically, even if just subconsciously. If one meets a lot of anxiously quiet South Asian kids growing up, even the most kind hearted start to form a generalisation.
The insecurity in an individual can be felt, and it’s no one’s job to fix them, so they go unchosen, reinforcing the insecurity “no one wants to hear me”.

Impacts

These emotional patterns may spread beyond the house to school, though it may be expressed differently depending on the conditions. This includes anxious silence, and outward compensation.
Eventually, an individual who has repeatedly faced similar patterns of pain may turn inwards and identify and heal their pain, integrating themselves; this is the ultimate impact, though it’s shockingly rare. This is the case of letting go of the slingshot and flying forward, instead of just pulling back forever, feeling tense, falling behind and turning bitter from denial of a possible better life.
Self improvement in other areas outside relationships is real and valuable, but with emotional thorns hurting them, it feels like they’re anxiously running from pain. This isn’t inherently bad, but throughout their development they would eventually want to feel healed to where goals and growth feels like a warm, full, colourful endeavour towards something beautiful.
Before consciousness and healing, one will go through one or many different types of responses.
There are 3 main types of responses:

Fitting in:

They’re quiet, in their head too much and never feel they ‘deserve’ to speak. They continue to fit the submissive mold they were given. No one has ever given them a safe space to feel and encouraged it. They feel shameful, invisible, and passive. They may worry they’ll never connect, feel chosen, or even feel noticed at all.

If they stay this way, they may subconsciously resort to attention seeking, which may be bullied back into submission, or even scarier, rewarded for an ungrounded, false persona. This causes…

Overcompensating:

They socially posture to be seen and impress others. This may look like eccentricity or rebellion in the name of ‘identity’. It’s a loud outside life with a hollow inside, as it isn’t genuinely rooted in their heart. It’s just a reinforced behaviour loop stemming from an emotionally desperate situation, so they anxiously fell into this new cycle. They feel like they have people who they see and talk to, but somehow there’s a disconnect from feeling actually understood by anyone. They may look back on their day and wonder why they even said or did what they did. If frustration of this builds up they may go back to fitting in, this time by choice but still disconnected. But if the person becomes conscientious they can reach…

Freedom:

This is not an immediate response, but it’s a choice and a process, and it starts by being fed up with the fact they’ve always felt this way. They see everyone else, even if their lives aren't perfect, naturally fall in and out of real friendships and relationships and find purpose. And any setback becomes a lot easier when you have real connections in your life; the #1 factor towards happiness and long term health is having good relationships in your life, as per the Harvard Happiness Study & Blue Zones indicate. They become very aware that everyone else seems to feel connected more than they do, even when they have people in their lives that internal disconnect between them aches.

It's a very uncomfortable feeling to sit with, that they don’t have what they’ve always wanted. But if they can sit with it, they will be on the path of healing to freedom.

They do the internal work, which is detailed later, in the form of deep reflection or therapy, and once they’ve pulled out the thorns and spent time rewriting their beliefs, they will be quietly strong and very sure of themselves. Now they’ve ‘caught up’ to everyone else, though they ‘missed out’ on years of their life they at least have the skills and emotional depth and intelligence that comes from the introspection of the healing process.

They know both who they are, and how to express themselves. These are the only 2 things you need for someone new to be able to love you. Now they feel well connected to those in their life. There is no big reward for doing all this healing, all they get is the feeling that their connections and interactions are finally real. But those who look closely may notice the depth of their beauty, and they’ll own the path of healing they took. It’s important to remember that others won’t notice their beauty if they don’t express themselves in the first place though. No one is obliged to save anyone.

Healing

The healing process is similar to **integrating your shadow**, which Carl Jung wrote about, and links to not only modern psychology but also similarities to religious and Eastern spiritual beliefs. You must become aware of and accept the negative parts of yourself, in this case your inexpressiveness and its root causes, explore and understand where it came from and how it developed, before finally integrating your understanding into your present self, so your identity isn't fragmented across your past but you see and accept your evolution into the person you are gracefully, no matter how much you don't like your past currently.

Awareness of Your Shadow

If you're reading this, you are already aware of the pain in your loneliness. Now you must accept that a lot of it is self-inflicted by your own patterns which formed poorly; it's not your fault, but **it is your responsibility** to help the little child you once were.

Grief

Visualise those key memories, those past versions of you. The ones that need the most love will come to mind first. It is absolutely heartbreaking to see that child grow up emotionally malnourished, unable to develop any identity or expressiveness. Cry. Rage. Repeatedly do this until the thorn is pulled out, and you're ready for the next step. You'll know you're ready when you're still sad about missing out on emotional richness, but you now wonder what can be done moving forward. Don't rush grief, let it happen fully. It should be noted that even as you progress, you will still see your past self and your heart will weep. That's okay, it means you love the child.

Forgiveness

It wasn't your fault. It wasn't anyone around you's fault either. They, like you, were never taught about this. They may have experienced it themselves, and it began long ago, so they never healed it and ended up hurting you without realising it without realising it sometimes.
If you've been through the grief stage, you know how painful it is to mourn the loss of all the years of hollow disconnect. I don't know how old you are, but if your parents never healed from a similar age as you, imagine how many more years of life they 'missed out'. If you had that much pain to integrate, would your mind really let you believe in hope? Or maybe you would deny it too, and continue unhealed, just like them.
You must truly appreciate that everyone is a product of their environment. If you were born in their body with their mind and raised in their environments, you would be the same as them. So you cannot hate anyone close up.

Real World

Once you have forgiven yourself and everyone else, you must begin real world changes towards the life you want.
If anyone is safe for you (even if you haven't yet embodied feeling safe with them), and they ask how you are, talk about your day and life a little more than you normally would. You'll find that they probably… don't react much at all. Because it's normal. Maybe they'll relate. Maybe they'll just say "that's nice". But for once, you let a little light shine through the cracks. This was never some big thing stopping you, and that fact can make it hard to grieve, but you'll see now that you absolutely qualify to be seen and by extension connected with, and loved.
If you don't have anyone to connect with, choose some social hobbies. Just go and exist in front of people. If you've healed partially, then take a deep breath and bring yourself to the present moment around others - you'll find that you're actually pretty good with people when you're genuine and honest. No need to hide anymore.
A similar process can be followed for shifting your beliefs around romantic pursuits.

Mental Traps

As you heal, the pain will cause your mind to self sabotage. It will scream the limiting beliefs at you, begging you to stay down, just go back to feeling disconnected.
"No one wants to hear you"
"No one will like you"
"You never connected back then, so why would you now?"

You may start to self sabotage, and if you question why you don't want to move forward your mind may answer with one of these limiting beliefs. You may sit with these for days, bashing against the narrow walls of your mind's beliefs, which once protected you but now enclose you, until you realise what must be done. Think, "what would a healthy version of me do?" Again you must accept them, respect where they came from, a place of desperation, and gently choose to grow beyond them from a place of love for your past, present and future self.

Remember that the experiences that formed these beliefs were a random product of an unfortunate environment. Nothing more. If you were exactly the same person in a rewarding environment, this voice wouldn't exist at all. You are not broken, you're just hidden. And this doesn't mean you have to be super outgoing to make up for lost time if that doesn't feel genuine to you, but it does mean you should have some type of regular social environment to reflect your expression off others. When you have a thought, consider actually saying it. You'll start to feel like a real person.

The harsh truth is that this healing is hard work for no immediate reward. It will take months, and even then the experiences have shaped you and scarred you. But once you do it, I promise the world will feel colourful. If you don't, not only will your life remain hollow, but you won't be able to provide anything better for your children if you're not an emotionally healthy example yourself. I

can’t force you to go through this process, but turning a blind eye will feel wrong in your heart if this is meant for you. I think our children deserve healthy hearts. And honestly all of this should be taught in schools.